



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
**Public Health**

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February 5, 2007

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **7<sup>th</sup> STREET PRODUCE MARKET**

On February 1, 2007, I sent you a memo describing an undercover report by Investigative reporter Joel Grover (KNBC Channel 4), focusing on the 7<sup>th</sup> Street Wholesale Produce Market. This is an update to let you know of actions taken since last Thursday.

**Enforcement**

On Friday, February 2, Terrance Powell, Acting Director of Environmental Health and I spent a number of hours in the early morning at the market, along with a group of six Environmental Health inspectors. The inspectors went back to the market Saturday morning and this morning for additional initial and follow-up inspections.

- Six vendors are still closed, three pending revocation hearing, one for rodents, one for no trash container, and one for no Public Health license.
- At the market on Friday, we began issuing Notices of Violation to customers, for violations of the County code concerning their practice of trimming, culling or repacking produce on the spot and throwing the remainder on the ground in the parking area. We will continue to cite customers until we see that this practice has ceased.
- We are trying to get all trash containers marked with the identity of the vendor, so we can follow up more easily with overflowing containers.

This brings the number of vendor closures to 63 and number of hearings to 40 since the beginning of December.

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This afternoon, staff have submitted to the City Attorney the necessary information for twenty-five criminal complaints, one against the market management and the remaining against various vendors. Additional complaints against vendors will follow. I spoke with the Chief Deputy City Attorney on Friday, who committed to work with us.

On Friday, we spoke with Los Angeles City Building and Safety staff who pledged to work with us in enforcement.

We have requested another meeting that has been scheduled for Wednesday, February 7, 2007, with market management and the vendors as a group. Among the items we plan to discuss are the benefits to general sanitary conditions if the vendors and the market management all worked with one pest control company and with one trash company.

### **Staffing**

As indicated, the inspector who was responsible for these markets for many years was transferred to another assignment. To provide better oversight, we are moving the oversight of the downtown wholesale markets from the District Retail Food unit which handled it previously to the Food and Milk section, which is responsible for inspection of other wholesale licensees, such as wholesale food processors.

We will add a second inspector to inspect these markets more frequently. Initially, we will be in the market daily. Once the market operation has improved sufficiently, we expect to be in the market several times a week. We will explore the option of recommending a fee increase for the wholesale vendors to fund this activity. We currently have 106 vacancies among the 491 Environmental Health Specialist II and III positions we have (the positions which do most of the inspection work), so it will be difficult to move additional resources to the wholesale food program at this time without reducing our capacity for other necessary inspections.

We are ready to implement the Board motions on the agenda for February 6, 2007. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please let me know.

JEF:dc

C: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors